

Vallejo House (Lachryma Montis)
Sonoma, Sonoma County, California

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PHOTOGRAPHS

District No. 38

Historic American Buildings Survey
Irving F. Morrow, District Officer
1605 DeYoung Building, San Francisco, Cal.

PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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GENERAL VALLEJO'S HOUSE
"Lachryma Montis"

Sonoma, Sonoma County, California

ADDRESS: North end of Third Street West
OWNER: State of California
OCCUPANT: Division of Beaches and Parks
USE: State Historical Monument

ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

"Lachryma Montis" was the final home of Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, a General in the Mexican Army, who founded the Pueblo de Sonoma in 1835. Under United States rule, Vallejo became a member of the State Constitutional Convention and a State Senator. He was one of the very influential men in California before and after the conquest of California by the United States. Built in 1851-1853, the home remained in the family until deeded to the State of California and established as State Historical Monument No. 4 in 1933. The house is of Victorian Gothic style and constructed of wood frame with adobe nogging. Exterior finish is redwood siding with ornamental Gothic barge boards at gables and hood molds at openings.

The home has been judged of "Exceptional Value" under the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings under Theme IV - Spanish Exploration and Settlement, and Theme IV, subtheme F - The Texas Revolution and the War with Mexico, 1820-1853.

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HISTORICAL INFORMATION

General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo caused this house to be constructed between 1851 and 1853, at a probably legendary cost of \$60,000 as a private residence for himself and wife and their constantly enlarging family. It remained in the family until 1933, when it was purchased on July 7 (anniversary of Vallejo's birth) by the State of California from Mrs. Louis Vallejo Emparan (Luisa Vallejo). The Indians had called this spot Chiucuyum (The Weeping Mountain), following an old legend and the presence of a crystal spring; Vallejo simply translated the Indian name into Latin - Lachryma Montis. (He always spelled it in the singular - Lachryma - not plural, as some more recent writers have mistakenly assumed.) The facts of Vallejo's life are relevant to the house; Bancroft (History of California) provided the early summation of that active and interesting life, but numerous details have been modified since Bancroft's time.

Vallejo was born on July 7, 1806. He entered military service for Mexico in 1823, and held numerous responsible positions - advancing from Lieutenant to Colonel to General. In 1833, Governor Figueroa sent Vallejo to investigate the Russian Posts at Bodega and Fort Ross; and in 1834 he was given the task of secularizing the Sonoma Mission of San Francisco Solano (founded in 1823). On June 24, 1835, he founded the Pueblo of Sonoma and continued to live in this area until his death on January 18, 1890. During the period of dissension between the Mexicans and the Americans, Vallejo tried to maintain neutrality. His sympathies were realistically with the Americans, and he was a member of the first State Constitutional Convention at Monterey in 1849. In 1850, he became one of the first State Senators.

Vallejo married Benicia Francesca Carrillo in 1832; from this union came sixteen children, ten of whom lived to maturity. The formative years of the surviving children were spent at Lachryma Montis, which would seem to have been rather cramped for such a large family. (There were only five bedrooms and a tiny hall bedroom.) At Vallejo's death, his fifteenth daughter, Luisa, inherited the property with her husband Louis Emparan; she was present at the presentation ceremonies of July 7, 1933 and stayed on as custodian until her death in 1943. Her son, Richard Emparan still lives in Sonoma.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL AND SOURCES

Books:

- Bancroft, Hubert Howe, History of California; in collector works of H. H. Bancroft, San Francisco, A. L. Bancroft, 1884, Vol. XXII, pp. 757-759.
- Hansen, Harvey and Miller, Jeanne T., Wild Oats in Eden, Santa Rosa, 1962, p. 131 (illus.).
- Hoover, Mildred B. and Rensch, H. E. and E. G., Historic Spots in California, Stanford University Press, 1948, p. 374.
- Kirker, Harold C., California's Architectural Frontier, San Marino, Huntington Library, 1960, p. 42.
- Knowland, Joseph R., California; A Landmark History, Oakland Tribune Press, 1941, p. 164 (illus. on facing page).
- McClure, James D., California's Landmarks, Stanford University Press, 1948, pp. 66 (illus.) and 141.
- Peixotto, Ernest, Romantic California, New York, Scribner's 1911, pp. 101, 102.
- W.P.A., California: American Guide Series, New York, Hastings House, 1954, p. 364.

Brochures:

- Saga of Sonoma, Sonoma Historical Society, unpaginated.
- State Historical Monuments: Sonoma Mission, Vallejo Home, Sonoma Barracks, Petaluma Adobe, Sacramento, Division of Beaches and Parks, unpaginated fold-out. (Useful historical material on Vallejo and an old print of the Vallejo Home)

Interview:

- J. A. Baird with Mr. Douglas, Beaches and Parks Ranger, Sonoma, February, 1964.

Letter:

- Mr. Clifford Bisbee, Park Supervisor, Division of Beaches and Parks, Sonoma, to J. A. Baird, February 25, 1964.

Newspapers and Periodicals:

- San Francisco Chronicle, September 22, 1963, Bonanza Section, pp. 10, 11.

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ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

EXTERIOR

Lachryma Montis is the perfect Victorian Gothic house of a modest type. It is not so lavishly decorated as the prime examples of that style in the United States, nor does it have stained glass windows and some of the other more picturesque adornments of the larger Victorian Gothic residences of the East and South. It is a rather prim, but attractive house of redwood, framed and sheathed horizontally with eight inch boards. The walls were filled with adobe nogging as insulation. Presently, the exterior is painted cream color, with white trim; the shutters (probably not of the period) are painted green, and there is a new light green asbestos shingle roof over the steep gables. The overall dimensions are approximately forty feet wide by sixty feet long. (The front, south, consists of a twenty five foot building section in the center with seven and one-half foot porches at east and west.) The kitchen building at the back is twelve by forty feet, and is similar in style to the house.

The principal "Gothic" flavor is imparted by the fairly elaborate wood barge-boards under the eaves, and by hood molds over each door and window. (The hood molds over the doors are deeper in definition than those over the windows.) East and west, on the front of the house, the porches are sustained by squared pillars with carved brackets in the "Gothic" taste (actually a local carpenter's imitation of the more fashionable ornamental forms from some handbook). At the front of the house, south, on the first floor, is a partial octagonal bay - suggesting an oriel window. Directly above it, is a pointed lancet window, with simple vertical tracery. All other windows are double-hung, with six panes of glass in each sash. The two main doors (east and west, off the porches) are framed with four vertical panes of glass, at either side, in the wood moldings used to surround these doors. Doors are paneled with simple repeated rectilinear units above and below.

It is difficult to see the house clearly at present, as there are massive citrus and magnolia trees close to the building. An old print (reproduced in the Division of Beaches and Parks fold-out brochure, available at the monument) shows the house as it appeared in the 19th century, with its high pointed gables, its three brick chimneys serving

six interior fireplaces, and the adjacent structures - the kitchen building at the north and the Delirio to the west. (This guest house has been moved closer to the main house in more recent years, to provide a service area for the State.) The interesting "Swiss Chalet", built about 1852 from precut and numbered timbers, shipped around the "Horn" and purchased by Vallejo in San Francisco, stands to the north-east. Its history is more properly the concern of a special report on this architecturally illustrative building; however, the juxtaposition of local materials in an international stylistic expression (the Victorian Gothic house) and international materials in a local reassemblage (the "Swiss Chalet") is an historically symbolic phenomenon of mid-19th century California architecture.

INTERIOR

Lachryma Montis' interior is on two floors, and is divided into squared rooms of ample though not large size. At the front (south) is a rectangular living room, seventeen by twenty-five feet; the character of this room sets that of the rest of the house. Floors are of soft-wood (fir) boards, three inches in width. A painted wood baseboard and cornice moldings frame the walls, which are of plaster covered with paper. (All moldings are painted cream today; all papers are figured types in the manner of 19th century papers, although not the original papers.) The ceiling is of white plaster; and in the center is a massive cast-iron rosette from which hangs a period chandelier, with kerosene lamps. In the center of the north wall, facing the partial octagonal bay window in the center of the south wall, is a fireplace with whitish marble mantel and cast-iron coal grate. The furnishings are of the period, and have in some instances been recovered, if their fabric had become too worn. Throughout the house, an intelligent utilization of family pieces with pieces from other local houses of the period has been necessary to create the requisite flavor. The result is a tasteful if somewhat "perfect" recreation of General Vallejo's own time. Carpets and draperies are of the period, or in the style of the mid and later 19th century.

North of the sala or living room is the main hall, running east and west, with doors at either end to the main porches of the house. (This hall has been given an additional hardwood floor to protect it

from the heavy traffic of visitors to the house.) It is ten feet wide and twenty-five feet long. On the south wall are doors to the sala. On the north wall (west side) is a door to the dining room. This is a chamber sixteen by seventeen feet, with a fireplace in the center of the north wall. (All mantels and hearths on the first floor are of the same general design and marble; those on the second floor are of a grayer marble and somewhat more square in design. There is a local legend that the marble came from Hawaii, but we know there is no marble in Hawaii. Therefore, the marble may have been transhipped from Hawaii and came originally from New England or Europe.) Along the north wall of the hall an elegant staircase rises to the second story. This has soft wood treads and risers (carpeted). The balustrade is of mahogany, and has slender turned balusters and a simple hand rail; terminates, at the bottom, in a complete spiral to the newel post. Behind the bottom of the staircase is a north-south hall, which divides the dining room from the library - the latter occupying the same relative position in the house plan on the east as the dining room does on the west. The library is of the same dimensions as the dining room, but has an additional door from the east porch (in the library's south-east corner). This library is perhaps the most successful period room in the house; its furnishings are especially fine and reflect the relatively stylish character of this provincial seignorial residence. Behind both dining room and library is a room (that is to the north), sixteen by fifteen feet. These two rooms are now used as storage and work areas, but were apparently bedrooms originally. They are separated by a roofed porch, which extends out north from the hall dividing the dining room and library. At the back of the house is a large grape arbor; this lies directly between the house and the kitchen building. In the kitchen building, the State restorers have perhaps "outdone" themselves. The effect is closer to that of a 20th century conception of the 19th century, but verges, as the house does not, on the picturesque. Thus there is a completely "Chinese" room at the east, with rough cot, a few oriental objects of the simpler sort, etc., to suggest the abode of the Chinese cook. The help's dining room in the center of the kitchen building is reminiscent of paintings of the W.P.A. era; and the actual cooking area at the west is undoubtedly too neat and orderly for a working 19th century kitchen!

The second floor of the main house is divided into three medium sized bedrooms; the master bedroom is of the same dimensions as the sala directly below it. The other bedrooms are above the dining room and library, and are similarly sized. At the west end of the east-west stair and hall area is a small hall bedroom, now furnished as a child's room. At the north end of the north-south hall, dividing the two back

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bedrooms, is a small bathroom. Throughout, period furniture has been thoughtfully disposed to suggest the restrained solid but unostentatious taste of the period between 1850 and 1875, as it might be experienced in a moderately well-to-do household of the United States at that period. All rooms in the house have the same window and door moldings; a square, plain block at the upper corners with repeated straight line moldings framing the door or window. Hardware is largely original. There are a few notable paintings on the walls (especially Oriana Day's view of Sonoma Plaza, painted under General Vallejo's supervision in 1883 - now in the library), but the restorers have wisely used family portraits, old prints and "religious pictures" to create the atmosphere of an old-fashioned Roman Catholic household with strong family ties between parents and their numerous children.

PLANS

Site plans and measurements of the house, with special details of such structures as the so-called Delerio (Delioro? - garden "folly"?), are at the Division of Beaches and Parks, State of California (copies at the Vallejo House, Sonoma).

SITE

Vallejo's estate, upon which Lachryma Montis was built, was made up of numerous lots acquired in separate transactions from various owners, over a period of several years from about 1847. The house stands on lot #345. Adjacent to the part of the estate within the city limits, to the north, was the Agua Caliente grant. Lachryma Montis, itself, was on land that formed part of the pueblo land claimed and later confirmed to the American City of Sonoma.

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APPROVED:

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